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COLLABORATION

“‘To work together.’ It is a mutually beneficial relationship between two or more parties who work toward common goals by sharing responsibility, authority, and accountability for achieving results.”
- Chrislip & Larson, pg. 5

Collaboration is at the heart of every great accomplishment. Easily defined as “to work together,” collaboration is a process that achieves great results for both parties involved. This paper will explore the benefits to collaboration and the differences between cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. Within the definition that Chrislip and Larson provide, immediately mentioned is that collaboration is *mutually beneficial*.

When collaboration occurs, be it successful or not, it brings with it many benefits that can be observed by the parties involved. Outlined by Gary, we first observe that collaboration increases the quality of solutions. The members of the groups are able to pool their breadth of experiences and create new ideas that an individual or just one group would not have been able to imagine.

Next Gary observes that through collaboration, both parties interests are preserved in the project through ownership. Through the process of collaboration, idea sharing and interests are all presented and both heard and understood. Reaching a solution as a group provides additional ownership in that it’s no longer one party’s solution, rather the group’s solution.

Through this ownership, Gary provides two additional benefits. First, the parties who are familiar with the problem are the ones finding the solution. This will ensure that the solution will actually solve the problem. Secondly, commitment to the solution is high, because of the same idea above that it’s the group solution. The investment that has gone into creating the solution is too high to be lost.

Gary offers several other benefits to collaboration, including stakeholder relations are improved, costs are kept down, and there is an increased potential to discover new and innovative solutions to the problem. (Gary, pg. 21)

With these benefits in mind, collaboration can become a great tool to progress not only one group's vision, but the vision of several groups together. It is important to note that working together with another party is not necessary collaboration. Winer and Ray explore the idea that collaboration comes with several levels in mind: cooperation, coordination, and then collaboration.

Cooperation is at the lowest level on the collaboration scale. Cooperation entails the very basics, in this case, basic information sharing between parties. Each party functions fully on their own terms and has full ownership over their accomplishments.

Coordination involves the principal that parties still remain the primary owners of their accomplishments, but increased communication occurs between the two parties. Within this communication, groups share their mission and goals and try to work in a fashion that will benefit both groups, while still primary acting as individual groups. The parties share resources during the coordination, as well as rewarding their members for their achievements.

Finally, Winer and Ray discuss collaboration. Within a collaboration event, both parties come together and form a third group, combined of members from both parties. Within this combined group, members set-up a mission and vision for the group, as well as goals that they have for the collaboration. The good collaboration is based on large amounts of communication and balance within the group. It is important for the combined group to make reports back to their respective parties to keep them informed on what the group is up to.

In a simple form, collaboration could be viewed as cooperation, then growing in complexity to coordination. Sometimes the terms cooperation and coordination are used interchangeable, with the basis idea of the parties retaining ownership in their accomplishments. It's through collaboration that we find the greatest achievements are feasible.

With collaborations come great benefits, with an increased ownership and commitment in the solution being created and implemented. When people work together in a group, share a vision and mission, and communicate their needs to the group, we see the most successful accomplishments achieved.

Bibliography

Chrislip, David and Carl Larson. Collaborative Leadership. ©1994,
pg. 5

Gray, B. Collaborating. ©1989, pg. 21-22

Winer, Michael and Karen Ray. Collaboration Handbook. ©1994, pg. 22